

The unique preservation of Yves Saint Laurent's birthplace: A singular cultural heritage in Oran

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Abstract: In 2020, the Affane Mohamed Foundation initiated the restoration of the Yves Saint Laurent house in Oran, Algeria, led by architect Youcef Fernane. The project aimed not only to restore the artist's birthplace but also to showcase his first private theatre, sketches, drawing table, study, and personal bedroom. The house, built in 1925 in the Plateau Saint-Michel district (now Hai Sidi El Bachir), exemplifies neoclassical architecture with Art Deco influences. This project stands out as a unique initiative in Oran, where the preservation of public figures' homes is rare, making it an exception in Algeria. The restoration, completed in 2022, has attracted significant attention, drawing visitors locally and internationally, particularly through social media, highlighting the cultural and historical value of the site. The research addresses visitor feedback, hypothesising variability in their testimonials, which serve as constructive criticism of this initial tourism initiative in Oran. The dual objectives are to illuminate the significance of the Yves Saint Laurent residence and to analyse visitor perceptions and attitudes towards this memorial site. Methodologically, the study is based on documentary research, including recent surveys and photographs from the Youcef Fernane design office and qualitative data from online questionnaires and visitor books. The results highlight the house's importance as a cultural landmark but also reveal a lack of publicity, affecting its visibility. Conclusions suggest that the museum significantly enhances Oran's cultural landscape, offering emotional and educational experiences. However, there is a need for better promotional efforts to increase its visibility and appeal to a broader audience, emphasising the importance of strategic marketing and visitor experience improvements for future projects.

Keywords:

cultural heritage preservation, visitor surveys, visibility, publicity challenges

INTRODUCTION

Among the immense and diverse cultural heritage holdings are house museums, which offer the opportunity to discover the daily life and heritage of a famous personality by presenting their residence as it was during their lifetime (Folin and Preti, 2019). The concept of the house museum first appeared in France in the early 19th century when artists and writers like Victor Hugo and Gustave Flaubert decided to transform their homes into museums dedicated to their work and life (Régnier, 2019). Since then, house museums have become a worldwide cultural phenomenon, offering visitors an immersive experience of the life and times of their famous owners. In many countries, house museums are regarded as important cultural institutions and major tourist sites, making a significant contribution to the local economy. Their preservation and promotion are therefore of paramount importance.

In Algeria, the concept of a house museum is relatively recent but gradually growing. Over the past few years, celebrity homes, historic houses, and traditional houses that have been rehabilitated have been transformed into house museums to promote

Algeria's cultural heritage and raise public awareness of its richness and diversity. Among the residences of illustrious people in Algeria are Emir Abdelkader's house in Mascara, the house of the writer Kateb Yacine in Algiers, the house of the painter Mohamed Racim in Algiers, and the house of the diplomat and writer Boualem Bessaïh in Blida. These museum houses are exclusively managed by the state, which has opened them to visitors to showcase their contribution to Algerian culture.

However, in Oran, a major city that has attracted and sheltered many illustrious individuals, none of their houses have been rehabilitated or made visitable; all these memory sites have become ruins or private properties. Oran had hosted figures such as the famous writer Albert Camus, who penned his work "La Peste" (The Plague) there in 1947, and the boxer Marcel Cerdan, as well as the contemporary writer Yasmina Khadra. Oran is also the birthplace of fashion icon Yves Saint Laurent (YSL), whose birthplace was transformed into a house museum by the Affane Mohamed Foundation in 2020. This project marks the first time in Algeria that a private initiative has undertaken the rehabilitation and reinvention of the residence of an illustrious person as a museum.

The Yves Saint Laurent residence, located at 09 Stora Street in Oran, was restored under the direction of the Oran-born architect Youcef Fernane, trained at the University of Science and Technology of Oran. Recruited by Mohamed Affane, Fernane also built the Hôtel Liberté, the apartment hotel, and the Théâtre La Fourmi before undertaking the rehabilitation of the Yves Saint Laurent house. The vision of this project was to restore this genius artist to his rightful place in his native Oran. The Yves Saint Laurent residence is protected and enhanced, both in its architecture and furnishings. Since its opening to the public in the summer of 2022, the residence has attracted significant interest, drew many visitors and gained visibility through social networks.

Unlike other cities, with the exception of the Palais du Bey, no public figure's house in Oran has been rehabilitated or made visitable by either the state or private entities, making the YSL residence an exception. This practice, common abroad through foundations, associations, or private initiatives, is here a unique occurrence. We therefore pose the central question: What feedback and testimonials were received from the visitors to the Yves Saint Laurent residence? We hypothesise that there is variability in visitors' testimonies, serving as constructive criticism for this first attempt to introduce tourism to the residence of an illustrious person in Oran. Our research has a dual objective: to shed light on the Yves Saint Laurent home, his living space, his studio, his first sketches, his drawing table, his desk, and particularly his private bedroom; and to provide information about visitors' perceptions and attitudes towards this place of remembrance.

The methodology adopted for this research is based on a documentary study, including research and readings on the Yves Saint Laurent residence. Recent documents related to the survey of the residence have been collected from the Youcef Fernane design office, along with photographs taken by photographer Sifeddine Kaddouri in 2022. In addition to documentation, the methodology is based on qualitative data collection methods, including surveys based on an online questionnaire targeting visitors to the residence, and consulting and examining the visitors' book where visitors are invited to write comments in addition to signing their names.

This exploratory study will enable us to gather feedback from visitors to better understand the heritage impact of the residence on them. Additionally, this feedback will be considered in future improvement or commitment initiatives of museum house projects. Several projects to create museum houses are underway, including the restoration of the house of the poet Jean Sénac in Algiers and the transformation of the house of the doctor, psychiatrist, and activist Frantz Fanon in Blida into a museum. From this objective, several sub-objectives can be derived:

1. Examine the unique nature of the project: Analyse the significance of transforming Yves Saint Laurent's birthplace into the first house museum in Oran.
2. Assess the symbolic value of the Yves Saint Laurent residence.
3. Evaluate visitor perceptions and feedback: collect and analyse qualitative data from visitor surveys and feedback to understand their experiences and perceptions of the museum and identify common themes and areas for improvement based on visitor responses.
4. Investigate the potential for developing additional memory sites in Oran: explore how the success of the Yves Saint Laurent residence can serve as a model for other historical and cultural sites in Oran and assess

the feasibility and benefits of transforming other residences and landmarks into museums or cultural centres.

5. Study the impact on cultural tourism: measure the effect of the Yves Saint Laurent residence on local tourism in Oran and evaluate the role of publicity and marketing efforts in attracting visitors and increasing the museum's visibility.
6. Provide recommendations for future projects: offer insights and best practices based on the experience of restoring and managing the Yves Saint Laurent residence and suggest strategies for improving visitor engagement, enhancing publicity, and ensuring the sustainability of similar projects.
7. Explore the broader implications for museography: analyse the museographic approach used in the Yves Saint Laurent residence, focusing on the balance between authenticity and recreation. And discuss the challenges and opportunities of applying similar museographic principles to other cultural heritage sites.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Term house museum

A house museum is a residence that has been transformed into a museum, where the primary focus is on the preservation and interpretation of the house's historical, architectural, and cultural significance. This type of a museum offers a unique glimpse into the lives of the people who once lived there, making it distinct from other museum types that typically focus on art collections or historical artefacts removed from their original context. The concept of the house museum dates back to the 19th century, during a period of growing interest in preserving historical and cultural heritage. One of the earliest examples is the Sir John Soane's Museum in London, established in 1837. This house museum was created by the architect Sir John Soane, who transformed his home into a museum to preserve his collection of art, books, and antiquities. His intent was to maintain the domestic context of his collection, allowing visitors to experience it as he did in his daily life.

As the house museum concept spread across Europe and later to the United States, the motivations for preserving these homes varied. In some cases, the houses of famous individuals—such as writers, artists, and political figures—were preserved to honour their legacy and provide insight into their personal lives. In other instances, houses were preserved for their architectural significance or as representations of specific periods in history. Linda Young (2017) categorises house museums into five distinct types, each reflecting different motivations for their establishment:

1. Houses of Heroes: These are homes of significant historical figures, such as political leaders, writers, or artists, preserved to honour their contributions and to allow the public to connect with their legacy. An example is the birthplace of Victor Hugo in France.
2. Houses of Works of Art: These house museums are known for their architectural significance or interior design, showcasing the artistic vision of their creators. Sir John Soane's Museum in London, UK, is a classic example.
3. Houses of Collectors: These homes were owned by individuals who accumulated significant collections of art, artefacts, or other cultural objects. The Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston, USA, originally the home of the collector, is an example.

4. **Houses of Social History:** These museums focus on the everyday lives of ordinary people, offering insight into social and cultural history through the preservation of domestic spaces. The Tenement Museum in New York City, USA, which preserves the apartments of immigrant families, is a prime example.
5. **Country Houses:** Often grand estates, these house museums are preserved for their historical and architectural importance, reflecting the lifestyles of the elite. The Château de Versailles in France, while grander than most, serves as an iconic representation of this type.

According to Pérez Mateo (2019), House museums differ significantly from traditional museums in their approach to visitor experience and spatial organisation. Unlike art or history museums that are designed to accommodate large crowds and display objects in a neutral setting, house museums maintain the original layout and decoration of the home. This creates an intimate and immersive experience, where visitors can explore the domestic environment as it was lived in.

However, adapting a private home for public access poses unique challenges. To facilitate visitor flow and ensure the preservation of the space, house museums often require careful spatial reorganisation. This includes creating clear circulation routes, installing protective measures for fragile interiors, and implementing interpretive signage that respects the aesthetic and historical integrity of the space (Pérez Mateo, 2019). Moreover, house museums employ various communication strategies to engage diverse audiences. Guided tours are a common feature, with docents or audio guides providing historical context, anecdotes, and interpretive insights that help visitors connect with the space and its former inhabitants. The aim is to create a dialogue between the past and the present, enabling visitors to reflect on the historical and cultural significance of the house and its occupants.

Form of cultural mediation

Cultural mediation in house museums involves creating an interface between the public and the cultural object, allowing visitors to engage with and appropriate the historical and cultural significance of the space (Davallon, 2004). House museums act as mediators of cultural heritage, providing a tangible connection to the past and enabling visitors to experience history in a more personal and immersive way. Jean Davallon (2004) defines cultural mediation as a process aimed at giving the public access to works or knowledge by building an interface between the audience and the cultural object: *"it aims to give the public access to works (or knowledge) and its action consists of building an interface between these two universes which are foreign to each other (that of the public and that of the cultural object) precisely to enable the former to appropriate the latter"*. This concept is particularly relevant to house museums, where the space itself becomes the object of mediation. Visitors engage with the history and culture of the site through the preserved architecture, artefacts, and stories associated with the former inhabitants.

Hendrix (2019) explored the history of the houses of the illustrious people, focusing on the evolution of these houses as museum sites and how visitors have been involved in this evolution. According to him, in the beginning, the houses of the illustrious were mainly private properties, inhabited by writers, artists or other cultural personalities. Over time, however, some of these houses began to be opened to the public, offering visitors the chance to discover the places where their cultural heroes lived and worked. These visits were generally guided by friends or acquaintances of the illustrious person in question.

Later, professional guides began to be employed to accompany visitors. Modern house museums have become important institutions in the contemporary cultural landscape. They are now managed by professionals, responsible for the conservation of the buildings and associated collections. Visits are often accompanied by commentaries and explanations provided by professional guides, who are trained to provide visitors with accurate and interesting information.

Hendrix also emphasised the importance of visitors in this development. Indeed, it is thanks to their interest and commitment that the houses of the illustrious have been preserved and transformed into house museums. Visitors have contributed to the conservation of these buildings and the preservation of the cultural heritage they represent. In addition, by visiting these house museums, visitors have the opportunity to connect with the history and culture of their country, as well as gaining a better understanding of the personalities who shaped these traditions. The museum house uses museography as a mediation technique, which raises questions such as: 'What does our audience do? What do they think? What do they feel?' (Pérez Mateo, 2019). House museums often employ a range of museographic techniques to enhance cultural mediation. For instance, guided tours, interactive exhibits, and carefully curated displays help to evoke the historical context of the house, allowing visitors to connect emotionally and intellectually with the past. The goal is not only to inform but also to create an immersive experience that stimulates the visitor's imagination and fosters a deeper understanding of the cultural heritage represented by the house (Pérez Mateo, 2019).

In addition, Cussac and Lambert (2019) looked at the heritage process of the Charmettes house, near Chambéry in France, which was the residence of the writer and philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau from 1736 to 1742, and showed how this private house became a national place of memory, thanks to its visitors. Cussac and Lambert also examined the challenges facing museums of writers' and artists' houses, particularly with regard to conserving and presenting the authenticity of the house, while allowing visitors to interact with the space and provide cultural mediation. They point out that these museums have to strike a delicate balance between preserving the integrity of the house and making it accessible and attractive to the public. Museum houses represent an original and enriching form of cultural heritage mediation. They help to promote and preserve cultural heritage, raise public awareness of its importance and bring to life the history and culture of a bygone era (Lord et al., 2012).

The concept of house museums in the Maghreb, while still evolving, has seen the development of significant examples that reflect the region's rich cultural heritage. These museums play a crucial role in preserving and mediating the cultural history of the Maghreb, offering unique insights into the domestic and social life of the past. In Marrakech, Morocco, the Dar Si Said Museum is one of the earliest examples of a house museum in the Maghreb. Originally built in the 19th century as a palace by Si Said, the brother of the Grand Vizier Bou Ahmed, the museum is a masterpiece of Moroccan architecture, featuring intricate tile work, carved wooden ceilings, and beautiful courtyards. In the 1930s, the palace was transformed into a museum dedicated to Moroccan arts and crafts. The museum's collection includes traditional Moroccan artefacts, such as carpets, pottery, and jewellery, which are curated to reflect the country's artistic evolution. The Dar Si Said Museum serves as a cultural mediator by preserving Moroccan heritage and educating visitors about the rich artistic traditions of the region.

In the Medina of Tunis, Tunisia, Dar Ben Abdallah is another significant house museum in the Maghreb. This 18th-century mansion was originally a private residence, showcasing traditional Tunisian architecture with its lush courtyards and ornate

decor. Converted into a museum of popular arts and traditions in the 1960s, Dar Ben Abdallah displays everyday objects, costumes, and musical instruments from Tunisia's history, offering a window into the traditional way of life (World Monuments Fund, n.d.). The museum acts as a mediator of cultural heritage, providing visitors with a deeper understanding of Tunisian social history and the daily lives of its people. In Monastir, Tunisia, the birthplace of the president Habib Bourguiba is a house museum of national significance. This museum, located in the birthplace of Tunisia's first president, offers insight into the life of a key figure in the country's history. The house has been preserved as it was during Bourguiba's childhood, containing personal artefacts, photographs, and documents that narrate his life and Tunisia's struggle for independence. The birthplace of Habib Bourguiba serves as a mediator of national memory, allowing visitors to connect with Tunisia's modern history and the legacy of one of its most influential leaders.

The development of house museums in the Maghreb region is met with several challenges, including preservation, funding, and public engagement.

1. **Preservation and Conservation:** The physical preservation of these historic homes is challenging due to the region's climate and limited resources. Maintaining the architectural integrity of the buildings while accommodating modern museum functions requires careful planning and significant investment.
2. **Funding and Resource Allocation:** Many house museums in the Maghreb face financial constraints, relying on inconsistent funding from government sources or private donors. Sustainable financial models are needed to ensure the long-term viability of these cultural institutions (Pérez Mateo, 2019).
3. **Educational Outreach and Public Awareness:** Engaging the public and raising awareness about the importance of house museums is critical for their success. Effective cultural mediation strategies are necessary to attract visitors and foster a deeper appreciation for the region's cultural heritage (Hendrix, 2019).
4. **Visitor Management and Accessibility:** Balancing the need to preserve the historical authenticity of these homes with the demands of modern visitor management is a complex challenge. House museums must develop strategies to enhance visitor experience while ensuring the preservation of their cultural and historical integrity (Cussac and Lambert, 2019).

As interest in cultural heritage grows, the future of house museums in the Maghreb looks promising. With increased investment in preservation, enhanced educational programs, and stronger international collaboration, these museums can continue to serve as vital mediators of the region's rich cultural history.

METHODOLOGY

The transformation of Yves Saint Laurent's birthplace into a museum is unparalleled in Oran. Until now, no other residence of a prominent public figure in the city has undergone such a transformation. This project is unique not only in its execution but also in its broader implications for cultural tourism and heritage preservation in Oran. It sets a precedent for future

initiatives, showcasing the potential of private and public collaborations in preserving and promoting significant cultural sites. The architectural significance of the Yves Saint Laurent residence adds a valuable dimension to this project. Designed by the Oran-based architect Youcef Fernane, who is well-acquainted with the city's architectural heritage, the restoration highlights both the historical and aesthetic value of the building. The careful attention to preserving the building's original features while adapting it for museum use underscores the importance of architectural integrity in cultural heritage projects. This aspect of the project offers insights into how historical buildings can be revitalised while respecting their original design.

The successful establishment of the Yves Saint Laurent residence as a museum could serve as a catalyst for the development of other memory sites in Oran. The city, rich in historical and cultural significance, has numerous potential locations that could benefit from similar restoration and museification efforts. This project demonstrates the viability and benefits of transforming personal and historical sites into museums, providing a model for future initiatives that could expand Oran's cultural tourism offerings and enrich its historical narrative. As the first house museum of its kind in Oran, the Yves Saint Laurent residence offers invaluable insights and lessons. The experience gained from this pioneering project will inform future endeavours in the city and beyond. Understanding visitor responses, assessing the effectiveness of museography practices, and evaluating the impact on cultural tourism will provide a framework for similar projects. This feedback loop is crucial for refining museum practices and ensuring that future projects can build on the successes and challenges of the Yves Saint Laurent residence. The project not only highlights the potential for expanding the cultural heritage landscape in Oran but also reflects a growing recognition of the value of preserving and celebrating local and international figures. By setting a precedent with the Yves Saint Laurent residence, the initiative encourages further exploration of Oran's historical sites, fostering a greater appreciation for the city's cultural legacy and enhancing its role as a destination for cultural tourism.

The methodology adopted in this proposal is based on a survey using an online questionnaire administered via a web form, targeting visitors to the residence, as well as examining the visitors' book—or register of signatures—available to visitors to the residence. We opted for an approach based on an online questionnaire because it makes it easier to gather data from large geographical areas. It was administered entirely online using a web form and targeted foreign and local visitors to the YSL residence. In the context of our study, the online questionnaire includes closed questions, multiple choice questions and open questions to allow free expression. The methodology adopted enables us to explore in an appropriate way the opinions expressed by visitors about the YSL residence. It also provides us with an assessment of the visibility extent of the house of Yves Saint Laurent. More than 200 testimonials were collected on site thanks to the guest book of the house, as well as 150 other testimonies thanks to the online questionnaire (Fig. 1). Using the questionnaire, the respondents were asked questions about how and why they visited the YSL residence, what they thought of the architecture and furnishings of the house, and invited them to make suggestions for improving the visit experience and the visibility of the house.

**QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE HERITAGE IMPACT OF THE YSL RESIDENCE IN ORAN:
CONTRIBUTION TO SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH**

The aim of this questionnaire is to gather important information for my scientific research work. The answers you provide will be anonymous and confidential. Your answers will be used solely for research purposes and will not be shared with third parties.

1. How did you find out about the Yves Saint Laurent residence?

Through the media (specify: newspapers, radio, television, internet):
 Word of mouth:
 At a special event (please specify):
 Tourist office
 By visiting another site (please specify):
 Other:

2. Is this your first visit to the Yves Saint Laurent residence?

YES / NO

3. Reason(s) for your visit (you may tick several answers)

I know this dressmaker and wanted to find out more about his life and where he was born.
 I'm so fascinated by this dressmaker's work that I made a special trip to see it and immerse myself in it.
 It was more the heritage and architectural interest of the building that led me to visit it.
 I'm interested in places of memory, seeing places where people have lived and the objects they've touched.
 I enjoy cultural tourism.
 I'm generally interested in cultural visits.
 I'm interested in how people lived in this dressmaker's time.
 I came for the exhibition on show.
 Other (please specify):

4. **What was your general impression after visiting the residence of Yves Saint Laurent in Oran? Were you pleasantly surprised or suddenly disappointed?**
5. **Did you make any unexpected discoveries during your visit? YES / NO** If YES, please specify:
6. **What did you appreciate most about this visit to the Yves Saint Laurent residence? The architecture of the house? Or the objects and furniture in the house?**
7. **Identify the elements that have testimonial value. Which rooms or objects in the house were most interesting for you? Why?**
8. **What do you think of the preservation of the house?**
9. **How would you describe the authenticity of the house? Do you think it adds to the experience of the visit?**
10. **Do you think that the residence of Yves Saint Laurent is an important part of Oran's cultural heritage today?**
11. **Do you think there is enough publicity surrounding the residence of Yves Saint Laurent?**
12. **Have you had a guided tour of the house? YES / NO** If YES, what did you think?
13. **Do you have any suggestions for improving the visitor experience and the visibility of the house?**
14. **Would you recommend the residence of Yves Saint Laurent to others?**
15. **Do you have any other comments or suggestions for the residence of Yves Saint Laurent?**

Fig. 1. The house of Yves Saint Laurent online questionnaire (distributed in French). (Source: Authors, 2022)

CASE STUDIES

Presentation of the house of Yves Saint Laurent

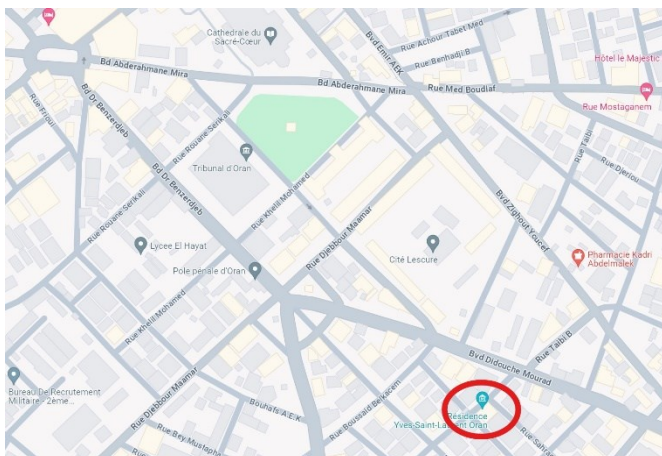


Fig. 2. Location plan of the Yves Saint Laurent residence. (Source: Authors, 2023)

The Yves Saint Laurent residence, built in 1925, is located in the Plateau Saint-Michel district (Fig. 2), now known as Hai Sidi El Bachir, in Oran, Algeria. This district is characterised by its broad avenues, enclosed urban blocks, and buildings that are aligned along the streets, occupying most of the available plots. The house's proximity to the city's only railway station, dating back to 1913, places it in a historically significant area where colonial influences intersect with local architectural styles.

The façade of the house (Fig. 3) is a quintessential example of neoclassical architecture, with white pilasters that starkly contrast against the vibrant yellow walls. These pilasters function both structurally and decoratively, accentuating the building's vertical lines and creating a harmonious composition typical of Neoclassicism. The balconies, supported by consoles adorned with intricate mouldings and geometric patterns, subtly hint at the Art Deco influences that permeate the interior. The upper cornice of the building is minimalist, reflecting the unadorned style of neighbouring structures. The blue shutters, a distinctive feature, may evoke Yves Saint Laurent's fondness for Majorelle Blue, reminiscent of the famous gardens in Marrakech, Morocco.



Fig. 3. The façade of the house after restoration. (Source: Sifeddine Kaddouri, 2022)



Fig. 5. Plan view of the house. (Source: Youcef Fernane, 2020, edited by Authors)

You can find the final spatial organisation of the house in Fig. 5, which is the plan of the residence provided by the architect Youcef Fernane. Upon entering the residence, visitors are welcomed into a lobby rich with personal memorabilia (Fig. 6). The walls are adorned with writings by Yves Saint Laurent, vintage family photographs, and everyday objects from the era, providing an intimate glimpse into the designer's life. The staircase at the back of the lobby, characterised by its Art Deco ironwork and mouldings, leads to the main living areas of the house. The flowing curves of the ironwork and the semicircular arches further underscore the Art Deco influences that define the home's aesthetic.

The main living space (Fig. 7, 8), located on the upper floor, is a large, open room divided into three interconnected areas. The original floor tiles have been meticulously preserved, maintaining the authentic atmosphere of the space as it existed during Yves Saint Laurent's youth. The restoration, led by the architect Youcef Fernane and his team of craftsmen, focused on historical accuracy. They utilised remnants of original mouldings and arches on the walls, combined with structural analyses and archival photographs, to restore the room to its original state.

The furniture and decorative objects within the house were carefully selected, with some originating from collectors in Paris, Marrakech, and Oran, to recreate the ambiance of the early 20th century.

The Yves Saint Laurent residence was not merely a residence; it was a place of creative exploration for the young designer. The grand salon, with its expansive layout, served as a private theatre where Yves Saint Laurent staged his earliest creative endeavours. Using dolls, costumes, and family members, he created miniature performances—an early indicator of his future in fashion design, where he would similarly orchestrate elaborate shows. On the opposite side of the residence are bedrooms (Fig. 9) and their adjoining bathrooms, which have been faithfully recreated to reflect the original design and atmosphere. These private spaces were reconstructed using archival materials, photographs, and personal documents, ensuring that they accurately capture the nocturnal ambiance Yves Saint Laurent would have experienced.

One of the most significant rooms in the house is Yves Saint Laurent's former studio (Fig. 10). This space, where the young designer created hundreds of sketches, has been carefully preserved and reconstructed. Some of these early sketches are displayed on a table, while others are framed and hung throughout the room, offering insights into the creative processes of the young artist. The studio is furnished with a trestle table, a sewing machine (Fig. 11), various fabrics, and a selection of artworks, all arranged to recreate the dynamic environment in which Yves Saint Laurent began to develop his distinctive style. This studio space not only served as a workshop but also as a sanctuary where the young designer could experiment and hone his craft, laying the foundation for his future in the world of haute couture.

RESULTS

Visitors' feedback

The visitors' book at the YSL residence in Oran is a testament to the admiration the place has won from foreign and domestic visitors alike. An examination of the signatures and comments shows that the YSL residence has attracted politicians, journalists and people of culture, as well as illustrious people, either writers or artists who have distinguished themselves in the construction of the country's political, social and cultural history of the country (Folin and Preti, 2019), such as the famous musician-composer DJ Snake, whose mother was born in Oran, and the writer Yasmina Khadra, who lived in Oran, as well as the French singer Patrick Bruel, who was born in Tlemcen, a town bordering Oran.

The model and inseparable friend of the designer YSL, Betty Catroux, attended the inauguration of the YSL house museum and congratulated Mr Affane on his tribute to the artist YSL, writing in the visitors' book: "Dear Mr Affane, to congratulate you and thank you for this fine tribute to Yves Saint Laurent, whose life I have shared, with great friendship". Olivier Cadic, the French senator for people living outside France, stressed the importance of preserving this architectural heritage: "I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Mr Affane for giving this house the soul that pays tribute to the genius of Yves Saint Laurent. Congratulations to all those who have contributed to the restoration and research work to share with us a part of the couturier's memory and make it unforgettable". Journalists such as Belaoun Souad, who works for the Dubai Media incorporated television channel, commented on the memorable experience of visiting the house, writing: "Pleasure de see such a culturally place restared to a beautiful state", while Jamal Jabali, who works for the international sports channel BEIN Sports, felt that

the house museum was a source of pride for the city of Oran and for the country as a whole, and congratulated its initiator, Mr Affane, saying: *"For those who don't know that 'YSL' was born in Oran. For those of you who do know, like me, we know that he started his first cuts in Oran, before he became world famous. So it was imperative for me to visit his home, a small museum, where it all began. Thank you Mohamed Affane"*.



Fig. 6. The hall with personal memorabilia. (Source: Sifeddine Kaddouri, 2022)



Fig. 7. The living space of the YSL family. (Source: Sifeddine Kaddouri, 2022)



Fig. 8. The dining room of the house. (Source: Sifeddine Kaddouri, 2022)



Fig. 9. Artist's studio. (Source: Sifeddine Kaddouri, 2022)



Fig. 10. Yves Saint Laurent's bedroom. (Source: Sifeddine Kaddouri, 2022)



Fig. 11. Yves Saint Laurent's trestle table and sewing machine. (Source: Sifeddine Kaddouri, 2022)

Visits to the YSL residence by celebrities such as French singer Patrick Bruel, writer Yasmina Khadra and composer DJ Snake have brought increased attention to the house and enhanced its cultural and historical status. These celebrities shared their positive experiences and appreciation of the YSL residence through their social networks, generating interest from a wider audience and attracting new local and international visitors. DJ Snake who has 10 million followers, did a photo shooting at the YSL residence, while Yasmina Khadra praised the Affane Foundation's private initiative, writing: *"Thank you for turning a ruined memory (this house, long abandoned to rats and pigeons) into Oran's cultural and artistic heritage. Well done for inspiring such an initiative and for the titanic efforts made to restore the great artist YSL to his native city"*.

This positive feedback demonstrates the impact that the YSL residence has had on foreign visitors. They also underline the importance of this unique architectural heritage and raise the profile of this house museum. French tourists visiting Oran, Beaucourt R. and Bougataya K., wrote: *"A very beautiful house by the great couturier YSL. Thank you to those who helped us relive the moments of his life in Oran"*. Gratime, on the other hand, wrote: *"Happy to be in this house, I didn't know before that YSL grew up here in Oran. It was a wonderful visit, thanks to the guide"*. This positive feedback also provides a new perspective on the cultural and historical importance of this type of heritage, and then encourages new perspectives, as mentioned in the comment from Benmaamar, who came from Lyon, France to visit the house: *"Many thanks. It's a beautiful house built by a great man. Bravo for restoring the house, turning it into a museum and keeping the memories alive. It's a great initiative. It needs to be redone elsewhere, as there are other residences to be restored and showcased"*.

This positive feedback was not limited to foreign visitors. The people of Algiers and Oran themselves have also expressed their pride and appreciation of the YSL residence. The Sahraoui family commented on the authenticity of the house and recognised the magical power of the place (Cussac, Lambert, 2019): *"A real trip back in time, we really had the impression that this residence is inhabited by the soul of this great Mister of fashion. Many thanks to our kind guide"*. The young Sahnine Lilia found that the YSL residence has stood the test of time, as her testimonial underlines: *"Coming from another era and another generation, through this place, you have brought me the pleasure of travelling through time without any means of transport and without a visa, thank you for this contribution of joy and escapism of the moment"*. Finally, Belkacem G., who once knew the artist at primary school, wrote of the visit and the artist: *"It was a memorable day to attend the inauguration of the house of this child of Oran, with whom I went to primary school at the Berthelot school"*.

Online questionnaire

Fig. 12 shows that the majority of visitors (35%) found out about the residence through the media, indicating good media visibility for the site. Word of mouth (20%) also plays a significant role, underlining the importance of personal recommendations. However, for a majority (60%) of visitors this was their first visit to the residence, demonstrating its potential to attract new audiences and underlining the importance of a positive experience for retaining these new visitors.

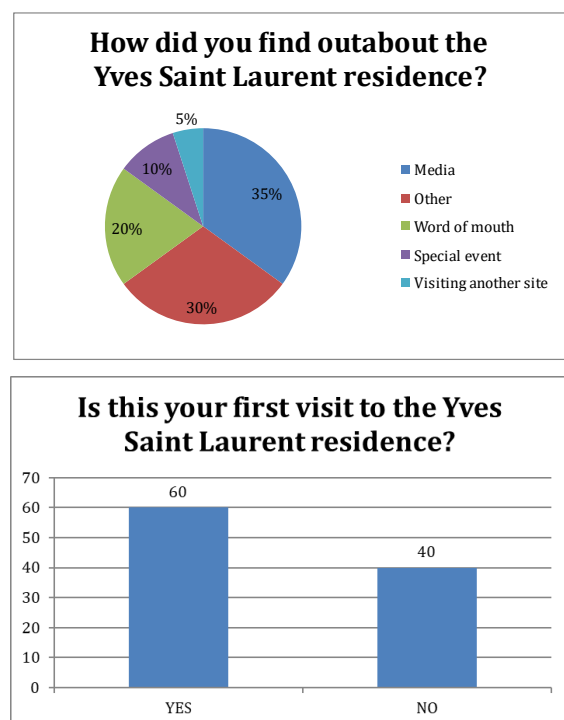


Fig. 12. The results of the online questionnaire (questions 1 and 2). (Source: Authors, 2024)

In Fig. 13, we can see that the main motives of the visitors of the YSL residence include an interest in the works of Yves Saint Laurent (30%) and heritage and architectural interest (25%), showing a diversity of interests among visitors with a predominance for cultural and historical aspects. This figure shows also that an overwhelming majority (70%) of visitors were pleasantly surprised by their visit, suggesting a positive experience that could encourage positive word-of-mouth and repeated visits.

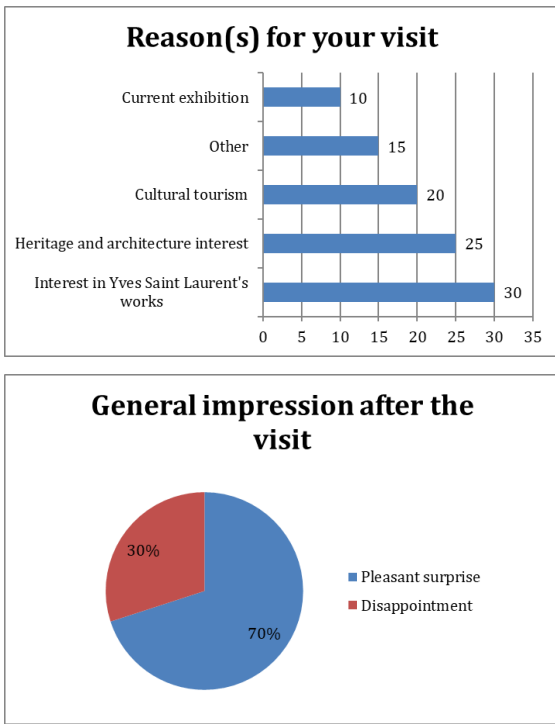


Fig. 13. The results of the online questionnaire (questions 3 and 4). (Source: Authors, 2024)

According to the Fig. 14, almost half the visitors (45%) made unexpected discoveries during their visit, underlining the richness and added value of the residence in terms of surprises and unexpected content. And although the architecture was appreciated by a minority (40%), an overwhelming majority (60%) of visitors was captivated by the objects and furnishings in the house, underlining the importance of tangible elements in enriching the visitor. Nevertheless, some visitors found it difficult to distinguish between original and salvaged objects and would like to learn more specifics on these details. On a more radical note, a few other visitors found that there was a mix of styles in the salvaged furniture.

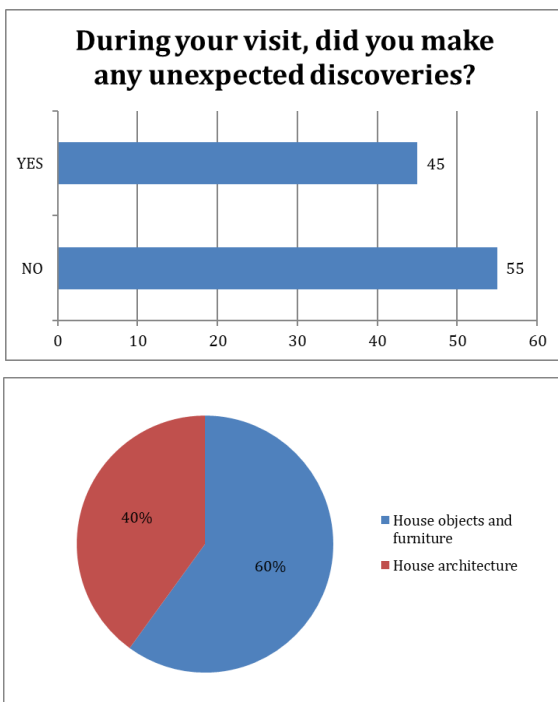


Fig. 14. The results of the online questionnaire (questions 5 and 6). (Source: Authors, 2024)

Fig. 15 shows that the visitors are particularly interested in Yves Saint Laurent's personal objects (25%) and period furniture (15%), demonstrating their attraction to artefacts that offer a direct connection with the couturier's story. It shows also that a majority (80%) of visitors rated the preservation of the house as good to very good, underlining the importance of maintaining the authenticity and historic integrity of the residence. And finally, the majority (90%) of visitors perceives authenticity as a positive addition to their experience, underlining the importance of maintaining and presenting the house with a high degree of authenticity to enrich visitors' immersion in the history of Yves Saint Laurent. Nevertheless, 10% of visitors felt that the house was not really authentic. These visitors see the house as both eclectic and hybrid. They find it pseudo-historical.

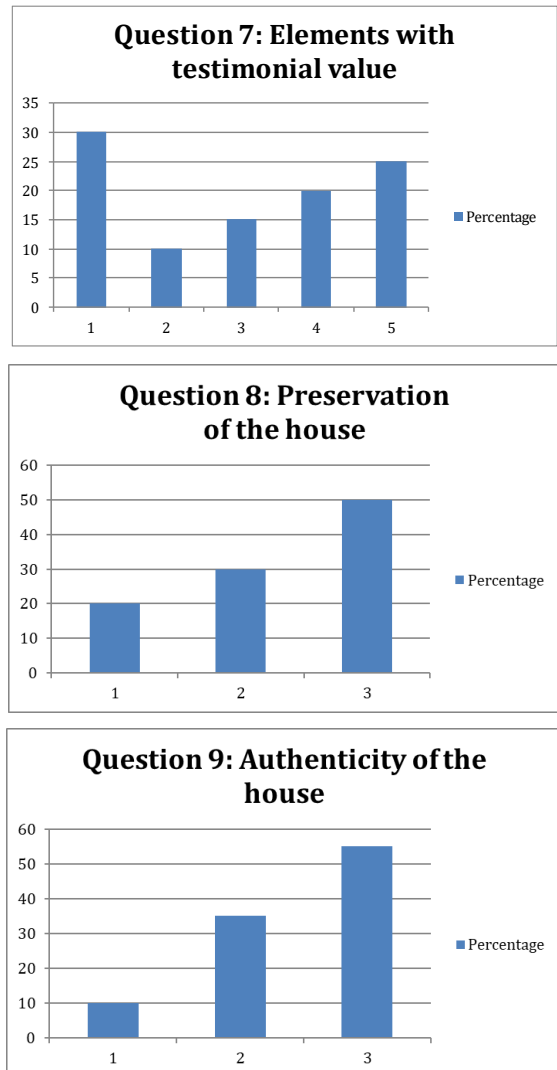


Fig. 15. The results of the online questionnaire (questions 7, 8, and 9). (Source: Authors, 2024)

Fig. 16 indicates that the residence is widely perceived (90%) as a crucial element of Oran's cultural heritage, underlining its significant role in preserving and enhancing local heritage. Nevertheless, a majority (60%) of visitors felt that advertising could be improved to attract more potential visitors, indicating a necessity to increase the visibility and accessibility of the residence. Visitors felt that not everyone (of all generations) was connected to social networks and that YSL residence needed more "visibility and publicity" with tourist agencies and tourist offices. Similarly, only 55% of visitors took a guided tour. This can later contribute to a better understanding and appreciation of the house, enhancing the overall visitor experience.

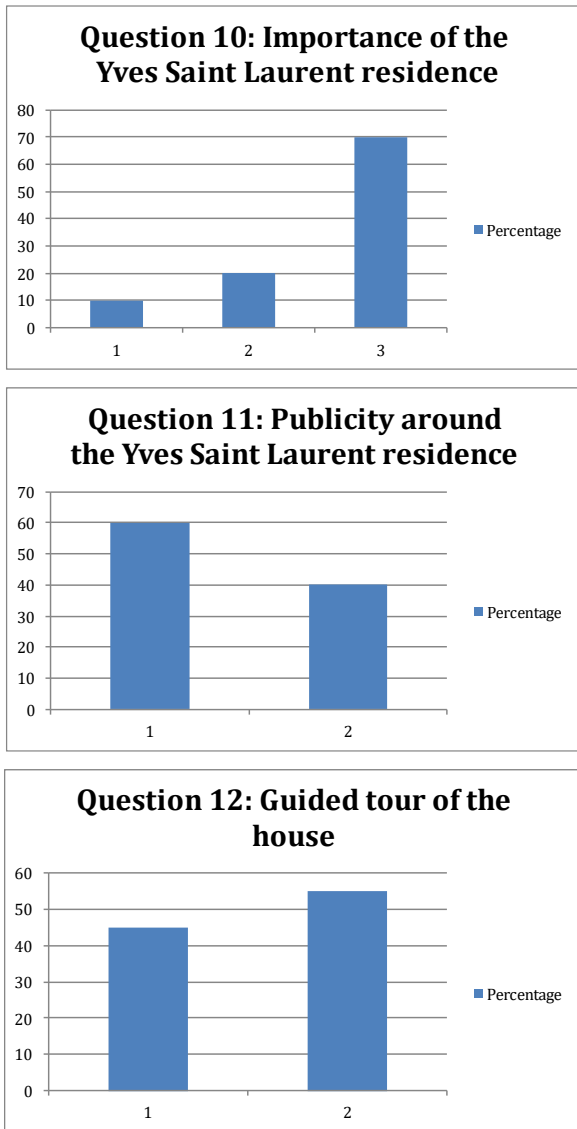


Fig. 16. The results of the online questionnaire (questions 10, 11, and 12). (Source: Authors, 2024)

According to Fig. 17, we note that visitors’ suggestions include a greater demand for more interactivity (25%) and improvements in the explanations provided (20%), as well as diversification of events and temporary exhibitions (15%). These suggestions are aimed at enriching and diversifying the visitor experience while raising the profile of the residence. Despite this, the vast majority (85%) of visitors would recommend the residence to others, highlighting their general satisfaction with their experience and underlining the appeal of the residence as a cultural destination. Finally, visitors expressed their appreciation of the warm welcome (30%) and made suggestions for the development of the site (25%), particularly in terms of future exhibitions. These comments show a positive commitment to continually improving the visitor experience.

DISCUSSION

The results of the online questionnaire reveal that feedback from visitors underscores the significance of the Yves Saint Laurent residence in Oran as a notable cultural and historical site of international renown. Visitors acknowledge the museum’s role in preserving and showcasing the legacy of Yves Saint Laurent, highlighting its unique position as a cultural landmark in Oran. However, the feedback also points out a crucial issue: the house museum suffers from insufficient publicity, which hampers its visibility and outreach. The lack of publicity for the

YSL residence is particularly concerning given its unique status in Oran. While the authenticity of the museum—reflecting the concept of museography that involves recovery or recreation of objects rather than their original presence—needs to be communicated clearly to visitors (Pérez Mateo, 2019), this alone does not account for the limited visibility. Foreign visitors, including those from France with familial connections to Algeria, express a high level of interest and appreciation. This new type of tourism, where French tourists visit Algeria to see the birthplace of their ancestors, is well-received and accentuates the potential for cultural tourism in Algeria.

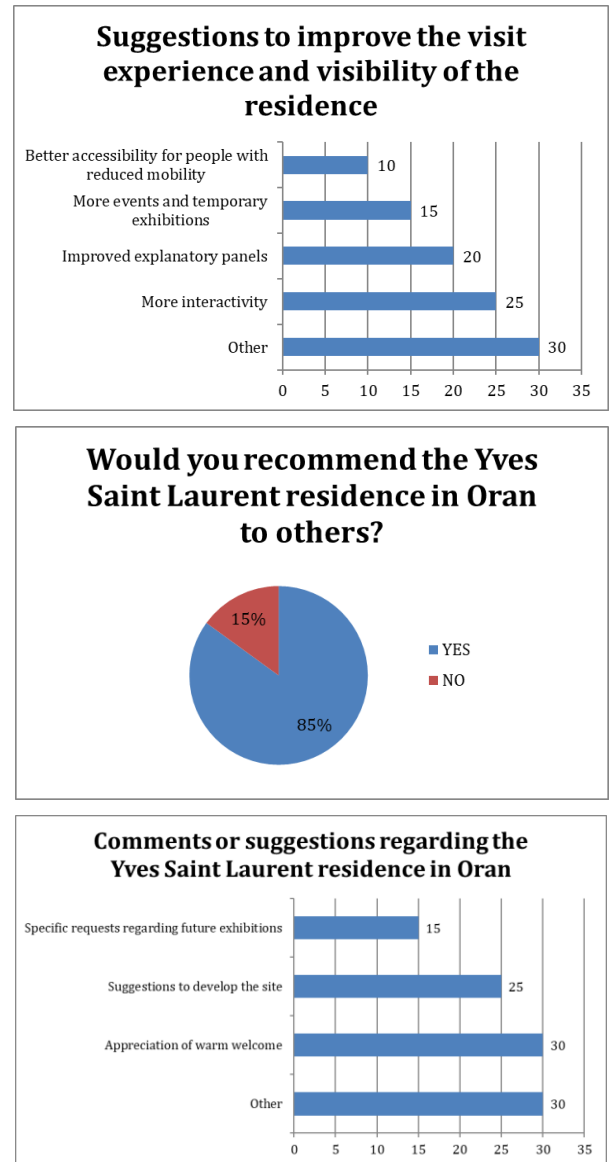


Fig. 17. The results of the online questionnaire (questions 13, 14, 15). (Source: Authors, 2024)

Despite the warm reception from local visitors and the positive feedback from some foreign tourists, these elements alone are insufficient to elevate the house’s profile. Tourism agencies and offices need to enhance their promotional efforts to improve the house’s visibility and attract a broader audience. The current lack of visibility affects the house’s potential to become a prominent tourist destination, despite its significance and the interest it generates among those who visit it. While the Yves Saint Laurent residence is a notable achievement in cultural preservation and tourism in Oran, it requires strategic marketing and increased visibility efforts to fully realise its potential as a major cultural landmark. The positive feedback from both local and

international visitors highlights its value, but addressing the visibility issue is crucial for maximising its impact and attracting a diverse range of tourists.

CONCLUSION

The restoration of Yves Saint Laurent's birthplace by the Affane Mohamed Foundation represents a pioneering effort in the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage in Oran, Algeria. This study aimed to evaluate the impact of this initiative on visitors, the potential for similar projects in the region, and the broader implications for cultural tourism and heritage preservation. The analysis of feedback from visitors to the YSL residence reveals a strong appreciation for the meticulous restoration and the historical significance of the site. Visitors highlighted the authenticity and the careful preservation of both the architectural and cultural elements of the house. The variability in visitor testimonies suggests a generally positive reception, with constructive criticisms focusing primarily on the need for increased publicity and broader accessibility. The positive reception underscores the effectiveness of the restoration efforts and provides valuable insights for future projects.

The success of the YSL residence demonstrates the potential for similar projects in Oran. This success will inspire local authorities and decision-makers to consider the development of additional house museums. By encouraging similar efforts, Oran can continue to enhance its cultural landscape and ensure the preservation of its historical assets. The YSL residence has not only enhanced Oran's cultural landscape but also shown the economic benefits of cultural tourism. The project serves as a model for integrating heritage preservation with tourism, illustrating how cultural sites can be leveraged for economic growth. This dual benefit of cultural enrichment and economic gain provides a compelling case for the continued support and development of similar initiatives.

To maximise the impact of house museums, it is recommended that future projects incorporate comprehensive museographic strategies that balance authenticity with engaging visitor experiences. This includes the use of both original and recreated objects to convey historical narratives effectively. Enhanced marketing and publicity efforts are essential to increase the visibility of these cultural sites. Collaboration with tourism agencies and the use of digital platforms can significantly boost visitor numbers and engagement. Further research is needed to explore the long-term impacts of such projects on local communities and cultural tourism. Continuous monitoring of visitor feedback and economic indicators will help refine and improve heritage preservation strategies, ensuring their sustainability. The restoration of the YSL residence in Oran stands as a significant milestone in the city's cultural heritage preservation. The project's success highlights the potential for similar initiatives to enhance cultural tourism, drive economic development, and preserve Oran's rich architectural and historical legacy. The findings of this study provide a foundation for future efforts to promote and sustain cultural heritage projects in the region.

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